

Applicant is reminded of the proper language and format for an abstract of the disclosure.

The abstract should be in narrative form and generally limited to a single paragraph on a separate sheet within the range of 50 to 150 words. It is important that the abstract not exceed 150 words in length since the space provided for the abstract on the computer tape used by the printer is limited. The form and legal phraseology often used in patent claims, such as "means" and "said," should be avoided. The abstract should describe the disclosure sufficiently to assist readers in deciding whether there is a need for consulting the full patent text for details.

The language should be clear and concise and should not repeat information given in the title. It should avoid using phrases which can be implied, such as, "The disclosure concerns," "The disclosure defined by this invention," "The disclosure describes," etc.

The Abstract contains the legal phraseology "means".

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 3, 5-7, 10 and 22-29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

In claim 3 the portion which reads "one of the cited facings of cited at least one conduit" is both grammatically incorrect and confusing as well as lacking antecedent basis for the cited facing.

Claims 5 and 7 lack antecedent basis for "the cited facings".

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 1, 2, 8, 15 and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Nalbach (U.S. Patent 3,948,386).

Nalbach shows in Figure 1 an upper portion 62, an intermediate portion 64, an exit conveyor 14 and a stationary plate 182 which is between the upper and lower portions and the plate 182 has an interruption such that articles drop down to the lower portion from the upper portion.

Re claim 2, the intermediate portion moves transverse to a drop direction.

Re claim 8, the shown closed circuit is circular.

Re claim 15, see Figures 11 and 12.

Re claim 21, there are as many drop zones as there are compartments.

Claims 4, 9, 11-14 and 16-20 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claims 3, 5-7, 10 and 22-29 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. 112, 2nd paragraph, set forth in this Office action and to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to James R. Bidwell whose telephone number is (571)272-6910.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Gene O. Crawford, can be reached on 571-272-6911. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

/James R Bidwell/

Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3651

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